



VILLAGER BACKSTORY

You may know Arthur Morello from Men's Billiards or the Wildwood Wildcats Booster Club, but what you may not know is that he was a limousine driver in New York and New Jersey.



Bill Mitchell | Daily Sun

GETTING TO KNOW ARTHUR MORELLO

Age: 65
Village: Buttonwood
Spouse: Josephine
Moved Here In: 2010
Moved here From: Manalapan Township, New Jersey
Favorite Villages Activities: Men's Billiards League, Wildwood Wildcats Booster Club, Golf



Kristen Fiore

THE VILLAGES DAILY SUN

Do you know someone with an interesting backstory to tell? Email kristen.fiore@thevillagesmedia.com, or call 352-753-1119, ext. 5270

When asked what he did after high school, Arthur Morello chuckles and says, "What didn't I do?"

It's an appropriate answer. Morello grew up in Jersey City, New Jersey, and went to Kansas for his college education.

"I started a catering business while I was in college, and by the time I graduated, I had 90 people working for me," said Morello, of the Village of Buttonwood.

Some of his other careers included booking bands and shows in the theatrical booking business, teaching high school social studies and working in real estate.

After a while, Morello got sick of Kansas and went back to New Jersey, where he worked with his brothers in a string of sub shops.

Then, Morello became a limo driver in New Jersey and

New York, rubbing elbows with people like wrestler Steve Austin and "Les Misérables" star Gerard Canonico.

Radio and TV personality Dick Clark was another frequent client. Morello said that Clark always came in on the midnight flight with his collar pulled up and a hat pulled down over his head.

"He came in like he was some superstar in hiding," Morello said. "I was like, 'OK, you're Dick Clark, big deal.'"

Perhaps one of the most important connections he made during his time as a limo driver was with the woman who would become his wife.

She was the executive vice president of the financial company Wachovia, and was one of the limo company's top clients because she traveled so much.

Morello met her when he picked her up at the airport.

By then, he was the limo company's No. 1 driver and could choose his clients, so when he saw she needed a driver, he'd always make sure it was him.

"It was well over a year, almost two years, before I asked her out," Morello said of his wife, Josephine. "I kept telling myself, 'If you ask this woman out and she tells you no, the company could lose their biggest client.'"

But it worked out. Arthur hoped to buy the limo company, but the owner wouldn't sell it to him.

"If I could've bought the company, I'd still be doing it," he said. "It was the greatest job. I had so much fun and met so many interesting people."

After his stint as a limo driver, Arthur got into the real estate business. In his first year, he was in the top

five. A few years later, he was running the company.

The stress of the 2008 housing crisis almost did him in.

"I had a major heart attack," Arthur said. "I think the stress got to me. I was dead for four and a half minutes."

Luckily, he was brought back. When he came to, he decided to retire.

He waited a year and a half for Josephine to retire, too, and they moved to The Villages less than a week later.

Arthur describes himself as a "second generation" Villager. "My parents moved here in 1990 and passed away before we moved here," he said.

Now that he's in The Villages, Arthur believes in the importance of giving back.

"I had a massive heart attack at 53 years old and was able to say, 'I'm done,'" he said. "Not everyone has that choice."

One way that Arthur and Josephine give back is by being board members of the Wildwood Wildcats Booster Club.

Arthur also spent three years running the prison ministry for Casa Hope Inc. in Wildwood before it was put on hold due to the pandemic. He would go to local correctional facilities and teach inmates life skills. This effort is a cause that's personally important to him.

"I grew up in Jersey City and my friends were either drug addicts or cops who were fighting drugs," he said. "I escaped that by going to Kansas."

Arthur said many of his friends didn't make it to retirement age.

"Everybody deserves a second chance," he said. "We're all important to God. Not a day goes by where I don't feel thankful."

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